

## HFNC report on work on the disused Vasey Rail Reserve Station Ground

Update November 20011

In 2009 funds were obtained through a Bush Guardian project to control weeds in this reserve and to produce and erect an informative sign there. This railway reserve is situated near the intersection of the Vasey-Gatum Road, Budds lane and Melville Forest-Vasey Rd, approx. 55 km via from Hamilton via Cavendish, Cavendish-Balmoral Rd, Bells Lane and Vasey-Gatum Rd. The reserve comprises a wider northern section (approx. 150 m?) of about 150 m length and a narrow southern section (approx. 50 m?) about 200 m long, the area in total being approx. 3.5 ha. *Eucalyptus camaldulensis* is the sole tree species and the flora is typical Dundas Tableland woodland, albeit modified by past activities.

The area is surrounded by road reserves on west and north end and Blue Gum plantations to east and south. Parts are heavily infested with *Sparaxis*, St Johns Wort and *Oxalis purpurea*. Cape Tulip is found on south end but relatively sparse infestation. Large clumps of *Phalaris* occur on the eastern flank and towards the western road, with small patches on the north and south ends. There are two areas that appear to be almost 'clean' - both on western side of the rail bed, in the middle and lower section of the reserve. A small section on the eastern side, mid section, is relatively clean.

One African Weed Orchid was found. Some Wild Gladiolus also occur, along with Onion Grass. Angled Onion occurs on the western side of the road on the west block (also a little near the south fence inside the reserve, some 20 m from the road). Two *Juncus acutus* plants occur on the rail bed. There are also some thistles present, along with pasture grasses other than *Phalaris* on badly degraded parts on the eastern side.

The following members of HFNC attended on 12 September 2009, working from 10 am to 12 noon and 1 pm to 3 pm:

- RB – 31 L Glyphosate + Pulse + dye mostly to *Phalaris* clumps, mainly on periphery (not complete)
- DL – 14 L Ally + Pulse + dye to *Sparaxis*, Cape Tulip & *Oxalis purpurea* on NW end and roadside
- RZ – 33 L Ally + Pulse + dye to *Sparaxis*, *O. Purpurea* & St Johns Wort on N half
- YI - 14 L Ally + Pulse + dye to *Sparaxis*, *O. Purpurea* & St Johns Wort on N end
- DM – 14 L Ally + Pulse + dye mainly to St Johns Wort on rail bed on N end
- LM – wiping *Sparaxis* using tongs-pads (concentrated Ally + Pulse + dye) on rail bed & N end

Further spraying was done on 21 Sep 09 (10.15 am -12.30 pm) and 29 Sep 09 (2.15 -3.15 pm):

- RB – 15 L Glyphosate + Pulse + dye on clumps of *Phalaris*/Cocksfoot on the rest of the perimeter and internally – also Angled Onion around big tree on roadside. Cape Tulip down the line near the south end was wiped with Ally + Pulse + dye concentrated solution (3 g Ally/L).
- RB – 10 L Ally + Pulse + dye on *Oxalis purpurea* and *Sparaxis* on the west side and NW corner. The aim was to treat the worst infestations before concentrating on “cleaner” areas.

In total, 131 L of spray was applied (not including wiping method), using a combination of spot-spraying (Ally) and blanket-spraying (Glyphosate on *Phalaris* clumps and *J. acutus*). There remains an enormous amount of work to be done in spot-spraying the *O. purpurea* and *Sparaxis* and treating the St Johns Wort.

The task of restoring the entire site is formidable, perhaps impossible. We should delineate the least infected parts (with bamboo stakes?) and work to expand these "clean" areas. That seems to be the only way to make a practical impact. The local Landcare Group could be of assistance and we should at least advise them what we are doing – unfortunately the Vasey Group is in recess.

There is a need to clear the site of Phalaris (there are several patches of complete cover, plus odd clumps) as a priority. Then concentrate on expanding the "clean" areas in a targeted approach. Can we eliminate St John's Wort? We may be able to contain it but to eliminate it from the worst areas (specially the rail bed) would seem to require a blanket spray and work in summer to pull up seedlings. Perhaps we "need to be cruel to be kind" as the Prince of Denmark remarked, and use tactics to remove the Wort (also *Sparaxis* and *Oxalis purpurea*) that will/may also have an equal impact on native species. Our hope then is that there will be recruitment of natives from the "clean" areas. To do nothing would, in the long term, mean the loss of the natives over the entire block.

We have no prospect of removing Onion Grass or the annual pasture grasses and some Capeweed - these appear to be of lesser problem for the long term because the site is infertile.

This project (and all similar projects) cannot deliver a good result based on one year's work. Funding bodies do not seem to be able to cope with that. All we can do is make a start and hope that there is a capacity to follow up in later years. Judging by the results from Fulham, Wannan and Kanawalla, that will mean at least 10 years work, and probably monitoring in perpetuity because environmental weeds will always reinvade. Our hope is that DSE, Parks Victoria, the Shire and/or community will take up the fight in future years. If that is not done then should be out enjoying what we have now, and not worrying about the legacy of indifference that seems to be general community attitude.

No formal flora survey was conducted but 35 native species were noted during the course of the work.

An informative sign with images of many wildflowers present at this site has been prepared and installed at the reserve by Reto Zollinger.

#### Native plants noted:

*Acaena echinata*  
*Acaena novae-zelandiae*  
*Arthropodium strictum*  
*Austrodanthonia* spp.  
*Austrostipa* (*pubinodis*?)  
*Asperula conferta*  
*Astroloma humifusum*  
*Bulbine bulbosa* (in bud)  
*Bossiae prostrata* (a fine stand on mid NE side)  
*Caesia calliantha*  
*Chrysocephalum apiculatum* (mid NE side)  
*Convolvulus erubescens*  
*Diuris chryseopsis* (a single plant, SW end)  
*Drosera whittakeri*  
*Drosera peltata*  
*Drosera* sp.  
*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*  
*Elymus scaber*  
*Hypoxis glabella*  
*Kennedia prostrata*  
*Leptorhynchus squamatus*  
*Microtis* sp. (not flowering)  
*Microlaena stipoides*  
*Opercularia ovata*  
*Oxalis perennans*  
*Pelargonium rodneyanum*  
*Poa* sp. (*sieberana*?)  
*Pimelia humilus*  
*Pimelia curviflora*  
*Ranunculus robertsonii*  
*Senecio quadridentatus*  
*Senecio* sp.  
*Themeda triandra*  
*Thelymitra* spp. (in bud)  
*Wurmbia dioica*